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Third Committee**Summary record of the 2nd meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 8 October 2007, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica)**Contents**Organization of work (*continued*)

Agenda item 62: Social development

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- (c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Organization of work (continued) (A/62/250; A/C.3/62/1; A/C.3/62/L.1 and L.1/Add.1 and 2)

Explanations of vote

1. **Mr. Aksen** (Turkey), speaking in explanation of vote after the vote at the previous meeting on the deletion of references to documents A/62/346 and A/62/347 from the list circulated in A/C.3/62/L.1/Add.2, regretted that the delegations had not been given more time to carefully consider the issue, study the resolutions referred to during discussions on the High Commissioner's mandate, obtain detailed information from the Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), understand past practice and consult their Governments. Turkey had abstained from voting because of the absence of the will to provide time for those essential prerequisites to making a decision.

2. **Mr. Ochoa** (Mexico) said that his delegation and a significant number of others regretted not having been given at least 24 hours to decide. The opportunity to hear why the High Commissioner's Office had presented the reports had been denied. The Committee's work was too important to allow hasty decisions. The procedure by which the reports had been submitted should be reviewed. The States concerned should have been consulted beforehand. Mexico trusted that the Chairman would take all appropriate steps to avoid recurrence of such situations, which were contrary to the spirit of openness and dialogue.

3. **Ms. Al-Zibdeh** (Jordan) stated that Jordan had abstained because very important issues must not be decided hastily. To take a thoroughly and comprehensively considered decision, her delegation should have been able to consult her Government.

4. **Mr. Hagen** (United States of America) expressed disappointment at the hasty manner in which the decision had been taken. General Assembly resolution 48/141 reaffirmed the need "for a continued adaptation of the United Nations human rights machinery to the current and future needs in the protection and promotion of human rights". OHCHR should not only be allowed, but also even encouraged, to bring any human rights issue before the Committee, whether or not a specific report had been requested. That would be in keeping with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, according to which "the promotion and

protection of human rights" was "a legitimate concern of the international community". Moreover, the reports in question had been drafted under memorandums of understanding that the Governments of Uganda and Nepal had signed with OHCHR. Lastly, it was troubling that the Committee would so precipitously consider deleting two human rights items without allowing delegations to consult their Governments.

5. **Ms. Maiera** (Brazil) said that the proposal to consider the two reports had caused surprise. As important institutional issues had been at stake, more time should have been provided for debate. Willing to consider any matter related to human rights, her delegation nevertheless understood why the presentation of the reports in an unexpected way had created unease. Not only substance but also procedure should be taken into account with regard to the presentation of reports. In the event, procedure had been particularly relevant because of the institutional implications of the proposal.

6. **Ms. Katarwa** (Uganda) stated that the vote in support of the African position and in favour of deletion had been a victory not for her country but for respect for procedure in the General Assembly. Uganda had been "ambushed" by the High Commissioner's decision to report on the human rights situation in northern Uganda without showing her report to the Ugandan Government. It was a principle of international justice that all parties should be afforded an opportunity to be heard. It was to be hoped that the High Commissioner would respect procedure. Uganda subscribed to observance of human rights under its Constitution and the international human rights instruments.

7. **Mr. Fieschi** (France) said that he failed to understand why — despite the explanations provided by the Secretariat regarding the mandate of OHCHR, and the African Group's acknowledgement of the Secretary-General's authority to submit reports — the Committee had forthwith decided not to consider the reports in question. Delegations and the Committee were free to decide on such reports. In 2006, the Committee had simply taken note of the report on Uganda. Some delegations' references to sanctions or to the peace process in Uganda in relation to the inclusion of the reports in the Committee's work were disproportionate and could not be taken seriously. With regard to Nepal, the action taken by the Committee in 2006 had set a precedent. Why should past practice be

changed without justification? The arguments advanced had not been convincing. The legitimate request of many countries, large and small, to be given time sufficient for consulting their Governments and taking a decision on an informed basis, after hearing what the High Commissioner had to say, had been rejected. An elementary right of the delegations had been denied and a decision had been taken on the basis of an irrational procedure and of deliberately inadequate information. The deletion did not augur well for the Committee's work. Yet France was ready to forget the matter and carry on in a spirit of open discussion, hoping that others would reciprocate.

8. **Mr. Nikuljski** (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the decision to delete the reports had been discouraging. Matters should not be forced when it came to important issues. His delegation had lacked sufficient time to consult his Government and receive instructions. His country hoped that there would be no more such occurrences.

9. **Mr. Babadoudou** (Benin) pointed out that most of the delegations that had requested more time had voted against the motion without waiting for instructions from their Governments. Respect for procedure was important to the African Group. The African Group would oppose any action taken without respect for procedure on issues related to the Human Rights Council.

10. **Mr. Gonsalves** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) said it was unfortunate that the issue had come to a vote. Under the circumstances, however, the matter had been correctly decided. Human rights issues should be fully aired before United Nations bodies, including the Committee, but without interfering with the efficacy of those bodies. His delegation agreed with Germany and France that principles should not prevent addressing the substance. However, the issue in question, narrowly construed, had not been a substantive matter; rather, it had been a procedural and jurisdictional question regarding the power of OHCHR, based on an expansive interpretation of its mandate, to effectively co-opt and define the Committee's agenda through the unlimited imposition of unsolicited reports. Nothing in the letter or spirit of resolution 48/141 authorized OHCHR to act of its own accord on such matters. Paragraph 4 of the resolution referred to the obligation of OHCHR to carry out assigned tasks subject to the discretion of the Secretary-General. In the event, voting in favour of deletion had been the

only means available to his delegation for encouraging procedural honesty and fundamental fairness and for preventing Member States from feeling "ambushed" by unsolicited additions to the agenda. Mindful of the power of precedent referred to by the European Union representative and others, his country believed that a negative vote would have set an unfortunate precedent.

11. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) stated that her delegation understood the African Group's position and the important role played by OHCHR. Qatar could have voted in favour of Benin's proposal but had abstained from voting for lack of sufficient time to consult its Government.

12. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the programme of work contained in documents A/C.3/62/L.1 and 2, as orally revised and amended subsequent to the vote taken in the previous meeting, together with the provisions contained therein, with the understanding that the programme of work would be adjusted, if that was warranted by the situation.

13. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 62: Social development

- (a) **Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly** (A/62/71-E/2007/46, A/62/122 and A/62/128)
- (b) **Social development, including questions related to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (A/62/61-E/2007/7, A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1, A/62/132, 154, 157 and 357)
- (c) **Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (A/62/131 and A/62/131/Corr.1 (English and Spanish))

14. **Mr. Sha Zukang** (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the item, said that, of the three pillars of the work of the United Nations, the Committee dealt directly with two, development and human rights. They were a prerequisite for the third pillar, peace and security, and part and parcel of the activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Since the 1990s, that common endeavour has focused on attaining the internationally agreed development targets, including

the Millennium Development Goals, and could be described as promoting a society for all. With children as the primary focus, increasing attention had been paid to social integration and cohesion. Deprivation, gross inequality and discrimination undermined the prospects for fulfilling the development agenda and ensuring global stability.

15. Key issues to be addressed by the Committee included poverty and unemployment, and the situation of youth, older persons, women, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Tackling abject poverty was a major component of achieving a society for all. Productive employment was crucial to poverty reduction and social development. That central message of the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen, had been reaffirmed at the 2005 World Summit. Yet, recent developments in global labour markets had created economic insecurity and inequality, adversely affecting efforts to halve extreme poverty by 2015. Job creation had failed to match the demand for employment and, in many countries, employment quality had deteriorated. Productive employment and decent work for all should be at the centre of economic and social policy.

16. Worldwide, unemployment was disproportionately high among the young. Youth should be integrated into the global economy. In fact, youth development should be a core objective of national programmes and young people should be actively involved in the policy process. Youth, which accounted for about 20 per cent of the world population, contributed greatly to national development and to the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, in addition to unemployment, young people currently faced an array of challenges related to reaching responsible and healthy adulthood in a globalizing world. Many, especially young women, often encountered obstacles in accessing health services. In HIV/AIDS-affected countries, young women bore the burden of caring for members of their households.

17. World population ageing reflected lower mortality. Healthy ageing and the ability of older persons to participate in the labour force contributed to welfare and development. Yet, as they became more involved in society, older persons faced specific challenges, such as abuse and discrimination. Older women, in particular, often found it hard to maintain their material independence. There was a need for

legislation to protect the rights of older persons and for mechanisms to prevent age discrimination in labour markets and to ensure intergenerational cohesion. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, set the framework for addressing the challenges and opportunities related to population ageing.

18. International initiatives had drawn attention to violence against women, and to the urgency for action. The United Nations had played a leading role in launching a system-wide initiative to ensure a long-term and comprehensive response, especially by providing support to national efforts. In January 2008 the secretariat for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, where it would join the six other human rights treaty bodies.

19. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted during the previous session of the General Assembly, aimed at eliminating the persistent discrimination and denigration suffered by persons with disabilities. Almost 120 Member States had signed the Convention since it had been opened for signature in March 2007, and, in anticipation of its entry into force, the Secretariat was making extensive preparations to support its implementation at all levels.

20. As the Coordinator of the Second Decade of the World's Indigenous People, he welcomed the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration offered a road map for building constructive relationships between States and indigenous peoples and for strengthening the engagement of the United Nations system with issues of concern to indigenous peoples.

21. The United Nations had helped tremendously to forge consensus and specific commitments on development and human rights for all, and that would continue. It had moved decisively towards mobilizing and providing practical support to States in order to help them to translate those commitments into action at the global, regional and national levels.

22. **Mr. Schölvineck** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/62/122), said that the report provided an overview of the discussion held on the priority theme

"Promoting full employment and decent work for all" during the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development. It also highlighted the issue of youth employment and examined several highly relevant issues, including labour mobility and corporate social responsibility. The creation of jobs for young people should be seen within the broader context of poverty reduction and social integration. With respect to labour mobility, the report underscored the importance of socially responsive and inclusive migration policies and of stronger partnerships between recipient and sending countries at the bilateral, regional and global levels, and stressed that the positive contributions of migrants to recipient societies deserved wider recognition. On corporate social responsibility, the report noted growing support for the view that companies should go beyond financial philanthropy to solve social problems.

23. The summary of the Report on the World Social Situation 2007: the Employment Imperative (A/62/168) surveyed the global trends in employment and work, and the socio-economic context of their development over the previous two decades. It examined such areas of concern as jobless growth, the global informalization of the labour market, economic and social liberalization, and migration, and showed how those trends had created greater insecurity for workers. The impact of such trends on social groups and the gender dimension of the changing labour market were also analysed. Recognizing the challenge for policymakers to achieve productive employment for all, the report recommended that Governments should formulate policies and strategies that took demographic and social changes into account. It also emphasized the need for political reforms and legal provisions in order to prevent work-related discrimination, as well as the need to ensure universal social-protection coverage, since increasing numbers of workers operated in employment situations that were casual, informal and outside standard collective contracts.

24. Turning to the questions relating to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family, he said young people now had numerous opportunities and assets, but that they also faced a complex and rapidly evolving economic and social environment. Increasingly, youth were proving to be key players in the development process; consequently, their full and effective participation at all levels was important to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and

to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

25. The Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the World Programme of Action for Youth (A/62/61-E/2007/7) reviewed progress made by young people and the constraints they encountered, and highlighted issues pertinent to globalization, employment, education, poverty and hunger. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/15, Section II of the report presented information on the achievements of the Youth Employment Network in lead countries, and provided an update on the status of national plans for youth employment. In collaboration with United Nations programmes and agencies, the Secretariat had established a broad set of indicators for measuring progress towards implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, as a first step towards establishing data on quantifiable core indicators that might enable stakeholders to measure youth development over time, and compare progress within and between countries and regions.

26. He recalled that the Secretary-General's report on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: the Millennium Development Goals and synergies with other United Nations disability instruments (A/62/157) had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 60/131. The report focused on developments since the previous progress report and was based on the activities and suggestions of Governments and entities within the United Nations system.

27. In reviewing the recommendations and conclusions of the report, he said that an updated report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would be considered under agenda item 72 (e) later in the current session. The adoption of the Convention represented a crucial opportunity for consolidating disability-related activities within the United Nations system. The recommendations suggested a possible streamlining of reporting and a review and update of the mandate of the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability to make the Fund more responsive. The three main disability instruments, namely, the Convention, the World Programme of Action and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, reflected the evolution of language and thought surrounding disability issues, and the nomenclature used in the Convention represented

currently accepted practices. The General Assembly might wish to consider promoting the harmonization and updating of language used for disability within the United Nations system.

28. While emphases and approaches differed, there was generally a basic commitment among the members of the international community. Meaningful progress towards establishing fully inclusive societies could be achieved through strong political will and the commitment of States, working with the United Nations system and civil society. He assured the Committee that the United Nations was doing its share in that regard, and he encouraged Member States to integrate disability, as a fundamental principle, into their current and future development-assistance programmes.

29. The report on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond (A/62/132 and Add.1) addressed the integration of a family perspective into policymaking and national-capacity development. The report contained first-hand information from 25 Member States on their recent follow-up activities. National action had centred on family policymaking and research, and on measures to create a conducive environment for strengthening families. Support measures had encompassed the issues of social services, equality between men and women, the upbringing and development of children, detection and prevention of intra-family violence and reconciliation of work and family life.

30. The United Nations Programme on the Family was also reviewed in the report, highlighting inter-agency cooperation on family-related issues. The recommendations included measures to better integrate a family perspective into national policymaking, including policy-related research, and into the policy outcome documents of the United Nations legislative and consultative bodies such as the Commission for Social Development. Consolidation of international support for national capacity-building to tackle family-related issues was the focus of follow-up activities. In that regard, it was recommended that the General Assembly should encourage United Nations agencies to integrate a family perspective into their activities.

31. Turning to the report on Cooperatives in social development (A/62/154), he said that, according to the International Cooperative Association, cooperatives generated approximately 100 million jobs, and

stimulated employment through self-help enterprises and commitment to members and their communities worldwide. The benefits and employment generated by cooperatives provided economic security, particularly in remote areas, and were beneficial to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and older persons. As self-help organizations, cooperatives also provided livelihoods in post-conflict situations. The report therefore recommended that policymakers should incorporate programmes that optimized the impact of cooperatives on job creation into their development agendas, and should promote the formation of cooperatives in new areas.

32. In the report on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/62/131), the preliminary findings from the first cycle of review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing had shown the progress achieved since 2002. An increasing number of countries had instituted coordinating mechanisms, many of which included civil society, academia and older persons themselves. Since 2002 the number of national plans of action on ageing and human rights legislation on the elderly had increased significantly. Similarly, the benefits of non-contributory pensions and other low-cost initiatives to support the elderly had been widely discussed at the policy level. Some countries had either set up new programmes or increased payments to older persons within existing schemes.

33. Technical support to Member States in drafting and implementing plans of action on ageing had increased significantly, but much remained to be done. A particular challenge was to focus international cooperation on supporting Member States in their efforts to prioritize ageing within national development. The regional commissions were organizing preparatory conferences in order to analyse, consolidate and eventually present the findings of the national review and appraisal process to the Commission for Social Development in 2008. Although the African and Western Asian regions had relatively lower percentages of older persons at the moment, the regional commissions in those areas would need to become more fully involved in the next phase of implementation of the Plan of Action in preparation for their future large demographic shift. The recommendations of the report presented a number of issues for the consideration of the General

Assembly. The year 2007 marked the fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and provided a unique opportunity for the international community to assess progress, analyse obstacles and chart directions for the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. The year also represented the midpoint in the schedule for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. As the Secretary-General had noted in his opening address to the current General Assembly, success had been uneven and, from a development perspective, the goal of social policy was to promote universal social protection and equity.

34. **Ms. Banzon Abalos** (Philippines) said that her delegation was somewhat concerned by the suggestion that the mandate of the United Nations on disability-related issues might be contracted to one single aspect of the entire disability programme. She recognized that the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities represented an opportunity to consolidate disability-related activities within the United Nations system. However, her delegation did not share the view that the reporting mechanisms should be streamlined in such a way as to place an explicit focus on the Convention. Her delegation naturally welcomed the adoption of the Convention as an additional tool for the advancement of the interests of persons with disabilities, but it did not regard the Convention as a replacement for previous instruments which were equally important and relevant, even if they were not legally binding. It was surprising that the various instruments concerning disability should be considered interchangeable.

35. She also noted that the recommendations on disability-related issues included certain proposals for the consideration of the General Assembly. It was therefore a matter of concern that decisions, such as the renaming of the unit responsible for disability issues within the United Nations, had been taken by the Secretariat before the matter had been fully considered by Member States. She asked the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development to clarify the Secretariat's intention in that regard.

36. She was of the opinion that the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability was currently functioning well under an original mandate that remained relevant. She therefore invited Member States to study the mandate, focusing on the need to strengthen the original intent of the mandate, rather than on recasting it in a manner that diverged from its original purpose.

37. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the World Summit for Social Development had established a universal and comprehensive approach to social development, the elimination of poverty, promotion of employment and the strengthening of social integration. Member States had fallen short of their ambition to attain those goals. He pointed out that debt cancellation played a key role in that regard, since the debt burden of States hampered their ability to tackle poverty and promote employment. Noting the tendency of the international community to emphasize human rights over social development, he urged Member States to place greater priority on the social development dimension.

38. **Ms. Zhang Dan** (China) said that, important though it was to follow up the implementation of the Convention, such action should not be taken at the expense of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities or the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. The three instruments, although complementary, differed in emphasis, some dealing more with human rights and others more with development. It would therefore be sensible to review the mandates of the Convention and the Programme and adopt a more holistic approach.

39. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba), after expressing her support for the statements by the Philippines and China, noted that most of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/62/122) focused on national issues. She wondered whether the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development agreed that the international financial institutions had a major role to play in the social development of developing countries.

40. **Mr. Schölvinc** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development), responding to the question, said that the Secretary-General's report contained proposals rather than final answers. With regard to the renaming of the secretariat of the Convention, it had occurred a considerable time before and did not imply any diminution of concern for the Programme of Action or the Standard Rules. He fully supported the suggestion that the mandate of the various instruments should be strengthened. Delegations would also need to consider whether the Special Rapporteur's mandate should be extended to include a role in the

implementation of the Convention. With regard to the point raised by the representative of Cuba, international cooperation was essential, on the part of financial institutions and others. As for the question of debt cancellation, the issue should be dealt with by the Second and Fifth Committees. It did not relate directly to development.

41. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that employment had a central role in promoting prosperity, poverty eradication, social inclusion and enhanced stability, peace and social harmony. One of the central pillars of the World Summit for Social Development had been to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority of economic and social policies at both national and international levels. All human beings, regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity or disability, had the right to employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. There had been no greater challenge to humanity nor greater threat to world peace than the failure to realize the vision contained in the Charter of the United Nations of promoting better standards of life and larger freedoms. Economic growth alone was not enough; poverty must be tackled on a priority basis through a focus on employment-generation strategies.

42. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the continued focus on the various social groups — namely, the family, young people, older persons and persons with disabilities — in the context of social development. Employment and poverty reduction strategies should target marginalized and vulnerable groups in the labour market. Investing in the future through youth employment was vital for social development. Measures should be taken to make young people more responsible, dynamic and self-reliant. The skill and experience of older persons should also be exploited, with a view to making them a driving force in economic development.

43. It was often argued that globalization and interdependence were opening up new opportunities through trade, investment, capital flows and advances in technology for economic growth, development and improved living standards around the world. Major challenges remained, however. Unless the benefits of social and economic development reached all countries, a growing number of people would fail to benefit from globalization.

44. The struggle to promote full employment transcended national frontiers and could be achieved only through a macroeconomic environment based on a coherent set of policies at both national and international levels. Several negative trends in world economic relations impeded development cooperation and employment generation in developing countries, including the decline in official development assistance, the widening divide between the rich and poor countries, rising poverty levels in many countries, the worrying impasse in the Doha trade negotiations and the continued marginalization of developing countries in international economic decision-making. A level playing field must be created and the asymmetries of globalization eliminated to enable all countries to reach their full potential. Measures must be implemented to include the informal sector in social protection programmes and establish incentive structures.

45. The Group of 77 and China wished to highlight the following principles in the interests of full employment for all: (i) the global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, was essential for greater social and economic stability within and among countries; (ii) development cooperation should assist developing countries in strengthening linkages with global value chains, creating domestic capabilities, diversification and successful labour-intensive export policies; (iii) global partnerships between Governments and the private sector should explore means of promoting corporate social responsibility; and (iv) labour mobility should be encouraged so that both countries of origin and countries of destination could benefit from the positive aspects of globalization.

46. The reform of international economic and social policy to realize full employment and decent work for all would require worldwide political support, the commitment of key global actors and the strengthening of global institutions. It was also inextricably linked to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the monitoring of agreed development commitments. The United Nations had a pivotal role to play in ushering in the new development agenda.

47. **Ms. Brás Gomes** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process

countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia; and in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had been powerful global commitments to social development and landmarks in the achievement of consensus on key goals. The European Union therefore wished to reiterate its commitment to the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and of the Millennium Development Goals. In spite of some positive developments, the key goals of poverty eradication, full employment, decent work and social integration remained major challenges for the development of stable societies.

48. As recognized in the European Consensus on Development, never before had poverty eradication been more important. It was heartening that the poorest were getting a little less poor in most regions; but it was a matter of serious concern that inequality was also rising. National action plans for social inclusion in European Union member States were intended to combat poverty and social exclusion, which were multidimensional phenomena linked to societal organization. Even in developed countries, pockets of poverty persisted and measures should be taken targeting specific groups. Tackling child poverty was particularly important, since the continuing poverty cycle deprived children, particularly girls, of opportunities for education and health and their related benefits.

49. States should adopt a rights-based rather than a needs-based approach in order to ensure that individuals and families were not overlooked by sectoral policies. Policies should be based on the integrated approach set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. A global dialogue on social issues among States Members of the United Nations, as equals, was imperative. Poverty-eradication strategies should adopt an interdisciplinary approach, with cooperation between public and private partners, to identify solutions to intersectoral problems. Social protection, job creation, non-discriminatory access to employment, rights at work and local development projects were important for the establishment of minimum social standards. Although Governments were primarily responsible for poverty eradication, the European Union would enhance policy coherence so that all its

non-development policies, such as trade, security and migration, contributed to developing countries' efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

50. The goal of full and productive employment and decent work was crucial. Since the establishment of the European Employment Strategy in 1997, there had been significant developments in employment and social protection at the European level. Stronger, lasting growth had led to the creation of more and better jobs, although further efforts were needed to reach employment targets. Employment growth had reached 0.8 per cent in 2005, but the European Union would still need to create 20 million jobs to achieve its 2010 target employment rate. Youth unemployment was high and a number of measures were being implemented to increase employability and provide incentives for employers. Although an increasing number of old member States were opening their labour markets to citizens of the new members, labour-market integration of legal migrants needed to become a more explicit component of employment policies.

51. European Union member States were engaged in a complex discussion on "flexicurity" — a strategy incorporating flexibility and security — with a view to increasing the adaptability of workers and enterprises. The point at issue was the exchange of traditional security in the job for security in the market, to be achieved by active labour-market policies, life-long learning and adequate social protection. A balanced approach was required, ranging from the adaptability of businesses to the modernization of social protection. The implementation of the decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization also remained a high priority.

52. Social integration was a key component of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It was particularly important in relation to older persons, persons with disabilities and people in especially vulnerable situations, such as children or women subject to armed conflict, violence, trafficking and other kinds of abuse. European Union member States had therefore made greater efforts to find coordinated solutions. The Union would review the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It would also seek to mainstream the issue of ageing in national and regional policies and to change public awareness of the potential contribution of older persons to the economy and society. With longer life expectancy, better use must be made of the experience

and competence of older people. At the same time, demographic ageing was creating serious financial and social sustainability problems for pension schemes, social care and health services. There was consequently a need to invest adequately in health and social infrastructure and to improve public-sector management.

53. The European Union was committed to delivering high-quality social services, which were an important component of the smooth functioning of the economy, through the full integration of women and persons with disabilities in the labour market. Social services were a fundamental pillar of the European social model, since they contributed to social and territorial cohesion, local and regional development and the dynamics of job creation, as well as assisting professional, family and personal life. In that connection, she expressed appreciation of the voluntary work done by churches and welfare organizations.

54. Lastly, she drew attention to the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, which was intended to raise awareness of the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disabilities, age or sexual orientation. The prohibition of discrimination was crucial to the full enjoyment of human rights.

55. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that productive employment played an important role in reducing poverty and promoting social development. As the *Report on the World Social Situation 2007* had found, labour markets had been evolving in the direction of greater economic insecurity and inequality. Such inequality was reflected in the emergence of global "jobless growth". Furthermore, the unemployment rate was disproportionately greater among the young, disabled and indigenous persons.

56. CARICOM concurred with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly concerning the social impact of employment policies, the importance of equal employment opportunities and the link between youth employment and poverty reduction, social integration and intergenerational solidarity. Her delegation noted in particular the report's conclusion that labour

mobility was an indispensable feature of the world economy.

57. CARICOM agreed with the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond concerning monitoring youth employment, and commended the publication by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) of a biennial Caribbean Development Review, which addressed the most salient aspects of social development in the Caribbean region, including issues affecting young persons. CARICOM continued to devise mechanisms to promote the integration of young persons as equal partners in the region's development.

58. CARICOM took note of the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing, particularly, the overview of activities related to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In the light of its increasing population over the age of 65, CARICOM had adopted a charter on ageing in 1998 to ensure older persons' health and full integration in Caribbean society.

59. CARICOM also took note of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. CARICOM continued to work towards reducing unemployment among persons with disabilities, eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting equal opportunities for them.

60. CARICOM reaffirmed its support for measures to strengthen the family, consistent with the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, and urged Member States to support the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities. CARICOM also supported efforts to facilitate family reunification, especially among migrant workers.

61. **Mr. Mokgothu** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that eradicating poverty was the greatest challenge currently facing the world. With half of the world's population living on less than \$2 a day, and a further one fifth on less than \$1, poverty eradication was imperative.

62. SADC would be holding a conference in April 2008 with the goal of promoting poverty eradication and development. Its member States had assumed national ownership of poverty-reduction programmes and continued to make determined efforts to improve food security in the face of persistent droughts and floods.

63. Globalization affected the ability of SADC States to respond to the social needs of their populations. Developing economies required the support of developed countries in mitigating its negative impact. SADC recalled that many countries had benefited from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), one of whose major objectives was poverty eradication.

64. Full and productive work for all was crucial for combating poverty and social integration. Strategies to combat poverty in the SADC region included creating income-generating activities and increasing economic diversification and productivity in poor communities. SADC had made a commitment to providing education for all, including opportunities for acquiring skills required in a knowledge-based economy. Small-scale credit was among the most effective tools for improving economic development and poverty eradication. Extending loans to women and young people had been identified as a highly effective way of combating poverty.

65. Very little had been done to incorporate the goals of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing into development programmes. Older people in developing countries continued to be overwhelmed by the extra burden of caring for their grandchildren and extended family members orphaned largely as a result of HIV/AIDS. SADC urged the international community to take prompt and concerted action to implement the goals set forth in the Plan. SADC also welcomed the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which would promote the development of societies more responsive to the needs of all peoples.

66. Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region which had experienced very little progress in attaining some of the Millennium Development Goals. At the current rate of progress, no sub-Saharan African country would achieve them by 2015. With more international cooperation and greater determination on the part of the affected countries, however, the situation could be

improved. SADC therefore called on the developed countries to fulfil their commitments to provide the necessary official development assistance to help them meet the Goals. SADC was committed to doing its part to realize the commitments agreed at the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session.

67. **Ms. Pérez Álvarez** (Cuba) said that none of the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development had been fulfilled, because of an unjust international order under which rich countries grew richer and inequalities between the North and South continued to grow. The Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly recognized that trade liberalization had had a negative impact on full employment in some countries and that globalization had increased workers' vulnerability.

68. Cuba noted with concern the alarmingly high world unemployment rate reached in 2006, particularly among young persons. Millions of people suffered from hunger, and the increase in the production of agro-fuels could increase their numbers. Furthermore, millions suffered from illiteracy, malnutrition and the lack of drinking water and health-care services. While developed countries discussed how to increase the quality of life of their elderly, many underdeveloped countries strived to guarantee that at least part of the population could reach that phase of life.

69. Since 1959, the Cuban political system had furthered the idea of achieving economic growth with social justice for all. Despite the United States blockade, Cuba's social and economic prospects continued to improve. Cuba had achieved near full employment and a high rate of economic growth. Men and women earned equal pay for equal work. The entire population enjoyed universal social protection. Priority had been given to health-care and teacher training, student work/study programmes and university education for the elderly, among other initiatives. Working mothers enjoyed generous maternity leave and other forms of social support.

70. Cuba attached priority to international cooperation for social development and provided assistance to the other third-world countries. Economic growth alone would not suffice to eradicate poverty. There was a need for the establishment of a

macroeconomic environment conducive to full employment and productive jobs. Developing countries must address the problem of third-world external debt, fulfil their commitments to provide official development assistance and eliminate agricultural subsidies. Only by doing away with the prevailing egoism, lack of solidarity and empty promises would the international community be able to promote true social development.

71. **Ms. van Beest** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth representative, said that she had met many inspiring young people in various countries but had felt disheartened when looking into the situation of young people around the world. Young people's rights were being denied on a vast scale worldwide, yet young people were fully entitled to their rights — it was not a matter of generosity.

72. Though every child had the right to go to school, many young people, girls in particular, had no access to education. Girls accounted for two thirds of children out of school. Equal access to education would give young women an equal chance in the labour market and the confidence to stand up for themselves.

73. On the issue of sexual and reproductive rights, young people lacked access to information and to safe and reliable contraceptives. Lack of access had an impact on maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality and gender equality.

74. In the field of politics, in many countries young people and women were denied the right to voice their opinion and to vote and run for office. Even where women did have that right, they remained greatly underrepresented in decision-making bodies.

75. She called upon all countries to ensure equal access for young people to education, sexual and reproductive rights and equal voting rights. She also called upon the Committee to adopt the Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth and to adopt a resolution that includes time-bound targets. Further, she invited the Committee to make a concerted effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially with regard to gender equality and an improved situation for young people worldwide.

76. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan, the hoped-for imminent peace in Darfur and the achievement of peace in eastern Sudan had created a

favourable climate for development and for fighting poverty and unemployment. The high growth rates experienced by the Sudanese economy in recent years would suffice to permit the elimination of poverty within a short period. Since 2001, the Ministry of Finance and National Economy had been carrying out a poverty-reduction programme. Moreover, a Joint Assessment Mission document issued after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement provided an overall development framework for the medium term, aimed at lasting peace and development, the elimination of poverty and the reduction of unemployment.

77. Through specific projects, the Sudan's national agencies operating in the social-development field had targeted women, the youth, the elderly and persons with special needs. In the area of employment of young people, particularly graduates, the Council of Ministers had decided in 1998 to establish a committee to promote self-employment projects for graduates. The committee operated through three main mechanisms: small enterprises, absorption projects and transformational training. Its numerous successes had included the establishment of a social development portfolio for graduate enterprises and a risk-guarantee fund. Since the 1960s, the Sudan had had considerable experience in the employment of graduates and, since the 1980s, in farmers' cooperatives. Efforts were being redoubled as the public sector became less able to absorb their growing numbers.

78. The Sudan carried out numerous projects and programmes for the elderly, in keeping with the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. A law on care for the elderly, already drafted and expected to be passed shortly, would represent a great step in the strengthening of the rights of older persons. The Sudan had also been active in the consultations leading to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had been among the first to sign. It had embarked on a major effort to incorporate the text and spirit of the Convention into its national policies and programmes.

79. Despite the many achievements made, the goals set at the World Summit for Social Development were still far from realized. Achieving those objectives would require considerable national capacity-building, which meant international cooperation and coordination through effective partnerships with donor

States, the offering of development assistance and total debt forgiveness for developing countries.

80. **Ms. Kurosaki** (Japan) said that her country had experienced repeated earthquakes in recent years. Despite increasing life expectancy, many of the elderly in Japan were disabled, which placed their lives in peril in the event of a natural disaster. Japan would continue to tackle the issues affecting the socially vulnerable, including older persons, persons with disabilities and children, by paying increased attention to their vulnerability and by sharing information on the subject with its humanitarian partners.

81. Japan considered human security a key perspective of its foreign policy in order to respond to such threats as poverty, environmental degradation, conflict, landmines, refugee crises, illicit drug trafficking and infectious diseases. Japan aimed to create a society in which individuals enjoyed safety, a decent livelihood and dignity, with the support of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security and other bilateral schemes.

82. On the issue of disabilities, in 2006 Japan had enacted a law to assist persons with disabilities in seeking employment, as well as a law that would, among other measures, create a barrier-free environment in public spaces such as streets, parking lots and parks. An education law had been amended to provide education tailored to the needs of children with multiple disabilities. In addition, the Government had recently signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

83. As one of the most rapidly ageing countries in the world, Japan intended to continue to implement useful policies and programmes and share its experience with other Member States facing similar problems. To respond to the demographic transformation, the Government was formulating and implementing a comprehensive range of measures relating to work, health, welfare and housing as concerned aged persons.

84. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that, for Colombia, job creation was a central instrument in building a more socially inclusive and equitable society. In 2002 her Government had begun to create favourable conditions for economic revival and productive and decent work. Its actions had led to a reduction in the crime rate and generated confidence in the economic and social environments. Economic and fiscal policies had led to the recovery of macroeconomic and fiscal

discipline and had created favourable conditions for investment and new markets for domestic products. As a result, in an environment of renewed confidence, economic growth had risen, and income distribution had begun to improve for the first time in decades. Unemployment had decreased significantly, and minimum wages and average household income had grown.

85. Based on her country's experience, high-impact macroeconomic policies were key in job creation, as was the implementation of programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of social groups identified as lagging in terms of employment. Such programmes, targeted youth, women, persons with disabilities, victims of internal displacement and demobilized soldiers from illegal armed groups. In order to promote decent work, States must expand social security, strengthen labour qualifications and promote workers' rights. Colombia had seen an increase in workers participating in social security programmes and health insurance schemes, and aimed to achieve universal health coverage by the end of the decade. Strategies to formalize employment in Colombia included consolidation of cooperatives and provision of microcredit to small businesses.

86. The goal in human resources training was to bring workers' qualifications into line with requirements. Colombia agreed with the Secretary-General on the matter of corporate social responsibility as a requisite for decent work, and it felt that private initiative should be coupled with social responsibility. She noted that the United Nations Regional Global Compact Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean was going to be established in Bogotá, Colombia.

87. Colombia considered that, to improve the levels of quality employment, it was essential to increase international cooperation to recognize the role of investment in economic growth and commerce. It called for broadening of the transfer of technology and strengthening of the mechanisms through which the United Nations system could support developing countries on that front.

88. **Ms. Park Enna** (Republic of Korea) said that, despite the unprecedented increase in world wealth, widening income disparities, increasing unemployment, population growth and ageing issues needed to be addressed more systematically. The

United Nations, Member States and stakeholders should prioritize cooperation on those issues and make sustained efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals and to implement the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

89. Her Government found it highly pertinent that both the Commission for Social Development and ILO were focusing on the promotion of full employment and decent work for all, given the central role of employment in eradicating poverty and achieving social integration. Attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as women, youth, older or unskilled workers, persons with disabilities and migrants.

90. To address the emerging concern of youth unemployment in the Republic of Korea, her Government was providing assistance to vulnerable youth and reinforcing Government coordination in countering youth unemployment. The Government attached importance to youth participation in the economic and social process and in global dialogue. In that context it was planning to host the Second World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, in collaboration with the United Nations, in 2009.

91. The employment situation of persons with disabilities was one of her Government's concerns. Recent legislation prohibiting disability discrimination and ensuring the rights of people with disabilities was designed to encourage employment of such persons. The Government was also working with the private sector to promote the employment of disabled persons, and had recently hosted the 2007 Disabled People's International World Assembly.

92. In order to give foreign workers in the country job opportunities, social security, and human rights protection, in 2004 the Government had introduced an employment-permit system.

93. With regard to ageing, the Republic of Korea was one of the most rapidly ageing societies. To address that serious issue, her Government had developed policies to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. They included creating job opportunities, promoting senior-friendly industries and raising public awareness of issues affecting older people.

94. Her Government had continued to pursue economic and labour policies that encouraged the fair

distribution of income and sustainable growth, in order to address the polarization of society since the 1997 financial crisis. Her Government was also exerting efforts to improve working conditions for non-regular workers.

95. Her delegation wished to note the remarkable progress made in social development by the United Nations and Member States in recent years, and considered that comprehensive approaches and shared responsibility would lead to social development, the goal of which should be empowering people.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.